



**U.S. Department of Justice**

**Carlie Christensen**

**United States Attorney  
District of Utah**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Oct. 27, 2010**

**CONTACT: MELODIE RYDALCH  
U. S. Attorney's Office  
801-325-3206  
801-243-6475 (CELL)**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### ***PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO VOTE AND PROSECUTING BALLOT FRAUD***

WASHINGTON – In anticipation of the upcoming election, the Department of Justice today provided information about its efforts, through the Civil Rights and Criminal Divisions and local U.S. Attorneys' Offices, to ensure that all qualified voters have the opportunity to cast their ballots and have their votes counted, without incidence of discrimination, intimidation or fraud.

"Although Utah has a history of conducting problem-free elections, we want to make sure residents of Utah know that reports of fraud or abuse will be dealt with promptly," U. S. Attorney for Utah Carlie Christensen said today. "Election fraud and voting rights abuses dilute the worth of votes honestly cast. They also corrupt the essence of our representative form of government. It is imperative that those who have specific information about discrimination or election fraud make that information available immediately to the U.S. Attorney's Office, the FBI, or the Department of Justice."

Christensen has appointed Assistant U.S. Attorney Stanley H. Olsen to lead the office's Election Day efforts. Olsen will be available Tuesday to respond to complaints of election fraud or voting rights abuses and to ensure that any complaints are directed to the right place. Olsen can be reached by the public at 801-325-3336 while the polls are open.

In addition, the FBI in Salt Lake City will have special agents available throughout the day to receive allegations of election fraud and other election abuses on Election Day. The FBI can be reached at 801-579-1400.

The administration of the election process is primarily a state rather than a federal function. States have the power to establish the place, time, and manner for holding elections. The Department of Justice plays a limited but important role with respect to elections. The Justice Department's Criminal and Civil Rights Divisions enforce specific federal laws that help to ensure that all qualified voters have an opportunity to cast their ballots and have them counted.

According to Christensen, federal criminal prosecutions involving election laws generally are limited to intentional corruption of the process by which voters are registered and by which ballots are cast, results tabulated, and elections certified.

Mistakes by election administrators, violations of state laws governing how elections are to be conducted, the accuracy of campaign literature, campaigning too close to the polls, the process by which candidates qualify for ballot status and events that occur in the course of political campaigns generally are not appropriate for federal prosecution, although such matters may violate state election laws. Voters with questions about these matters should contact their county clerk. Clerks' offices are also the best place to call with questions about where to vote.

### **Civil Rights Division:**

The Civil Rights Division is responsible for ensuring compliance with the civil provisions of federal laws that protect the right to vote, and with criminal law prohibiting discriminatory interference with that right.

The Civil Rights Division's Voting Section enforces civil provisions of federal laws that protect the right to vote including: the Voting Rights Act; the National Voter Registration Act; the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act; and the Help America Vote Act. Among other things, these laws prohibit discrimination based on race or membership in a minority language group; prohibit intimidation of voters; provide that voters who need assistance in voting because of disability or illiteracy can obtain assistance from a person of their choice; require minority language election materials and assistance in certain jurisdictions; provide for accessible election machines for voters with disabilities; require provisional ballots for voters who assert they are eligible but whose names do not appear on poll books; provide for absentee ballots for service members and U.S. citizens living abroad; and require states to ensure that citizens can register at driver license offices, public assistance offices and other state agencies; and include requirements regarding maintaining voter registration lists.

The Civil Rights Division's Criminal Section enforces federal criminal statutes that prohibit voter intimidation and suppression based on race, color, national origin or

religion. As it has in the past, on Election Day, Nov. 2, 2010, the Civil Rights Division will implement a comprehensive program to help ensure ballot access that will include the following:

The Civil Rights Division will announce later this week which states will have federal personnel as election monitors and observers at polling places.

Civil Rights Division attorneys in both the Voting and Criminal Sections in Washington, D.C., will be ready to receive election-related complaints of potential violations relating to any of the statutes the Civil Rights Division enforces. Attorneys in the division will take appropriate action and will consult and coordinate with local U.S. Attorneys' Offices and with other entities within the Department of Justice concerning these complaints on and after Election Day, as appropriate.

Civil Rights Division staff will be available at special toll-free numbers to receive complaints related to ballot access (1-800-253-3931) (TTY line 1-877-267-8971). In addition, individuals can also report complaints, problems or concerns related to voting via the Internet. Forms may be submitted through a link on the department's Web page: [www.justice.gov/](http://www.justice.gov/).

#### **Criminal Division and the Department's 94 U.S. Attorneys' Offices:**

The Department's Criminal Division oversees the enforcement of federal laws that criminalize voter fraud and protect the integrity of the federal election process.

The Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section and the Department's 94 U.S. Attorneys' Offices are responsible for enforcing the federal criminal laws that prohibit various forms of election fraud, such as vote buying, multiple voting, submission of fraudulent ballots or registrations, destruction of ballots or registrations, voter intimidation, alteration of votes and malfeasance by election officials, as well as federal civil law prohibiting voter intimidation that does not involve discrimination or intimidation on grounds of race or color.

On Tuesday, these offices will work together and with the FBI to ensure that complaints from the public involving possible voter fraud are handled appropriately and expeditiously. Voter fraud complaints may be directed to any of the local U.S. Attorneys' Offices, the local FBI offices or the Public Integrity Section (202-514-1412). A list of U.S. Attorneys' Office can be found at [www.justice.gov/usao/offices/index.html](http://www.justice.gov/usao/offices/index.html) and a list of FBI offices can be found at: [www.fbi.gov](http://www.fbi.gov).

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